

Educational 'seed' planted in Sun Valley

For 300 Latino junior and senior high school students, the importance of education was nurtured and re-emphasized at the 18th annual Hispanic Youth Symposium. From Bonners Ferry to Preston and from Weiser to Driggs, they came from all over the state, converging in Sun Valley April 27 - 29 for a memorable weekend.

Luis Ibarra, a keynote speaker who has attended the symposium every year since its inception, reminded the students that the high-powered weekend was just a start to their futures. "We're only planting the seed," he said. "Many people at this symposium believe in you; now you just have to believe in yourselves."

Ibarra offered advice to the students about making better lives for themselves and their families through achieving an education. He also emphasized the importance of surrounding themselves with positive people and influences, and with holding onto their Latino culture.

For many students who attend, the weekend is entirely exhilarating, for others it's inspiring. And for some - especially those who earn scholarships - the time can be very emotional. Many teens are the first in their families with a chance to further their education. For some, a scholarship may offer the only opportunity to attend college or receive additional schooling.

Photo: University rep

Since 1990, the Department of Energy and contractors at Idaho National Laboratory have collaborated with state agencies and employers, private industry, regional educational institutions and Gem State Diversity Initiatives to host the annual outreach effort aimed at encouraging Latino teens to seek brighter futures by staying in school.

The Hispanic Youth Symposium involves at-risk students and those seeking education beyond high school. During the three-day event, the teens learned about the importance of getting a good education and were offered multiple information-packed opportunities to examine future career paths. They listened to motivational speakers, competed in interactive skills contests, participated in workshops, attended a career fair and met with college recruiters. Throughout the symposium, students were evaluated, and scholarships were awarded based on quality of participation, leadership and degree of dedication.

A university representative points out important academic and campus information.

In 2006, scholarship totals were \$920,000. Organizers this year were pleasantly surprised when the educational institutions from Idaho, Utah, Washington and Montana awarded more than \$1.6 million in scholarships at the awards ceremony on Sunday.

Albertson College of Idaho led the way in offering monetary assistance, providing more than \$1 million in scholarships to 46 individuals. Other participating colleges and universities were Boise State University, BYU-Idaho, College of Southern Idaho, Eastern Idaho Technical College, Idaho State University, Lewis-Clark State College, Northwest Nazarene University, University of Idaho, Utah State University, Montana State University and Gonzaga University.

A total of 131 students walked away with scholarships ranging in value from \$200 to \$56,000. Many were awarded multiple scholarships. Of the scholarship recipients, 51 were from the Upper Snake River Plain region, 28 from the Magic Valley, 44 from the Treasure Valley area and the remainder from other areas of the state.

In the closing ceremony of the symposium, Ibarra led the students in creating a symbolic rainstorm - as a reminder that they must water the educational seeds planted during the weekend.

[News release](#) and list of winners.

General Contact:

Toni Vandel, (208) 526-0085,

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Photo: Career fair

A career fair gave students the opportunity to mingle with college recruiters and business representatives.

Photo: Engineering workshop

Students collaborate on a project in an engineering workshop.